

VZCZCXRO3236
OO RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHBK #3208/01 2981016
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 241016Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4817
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 6440
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 9126
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 5312
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 4987
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1127
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 2482
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2070
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 5398
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 003208

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS
NSC FOR PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/24/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TH](#) [CB](#)
SUBJECT: THAILAND COMMITTED TO PEACEFUL RESOLUTION FOR
BORDER DISPUTE WITH CAMBODIA

Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Supreme Commander General Songkitti Jaggabartra October 24 told the Ambassador that Cambodia recently had reinforced troops near Preah Vihear temple. Nevertheless, the Thai government remained committed to a peaceful resolution to the dispute. Songkitti said the United Nations had recently given the final approval for Thailand to deploy a battalion of troops to Darfur and the Thai military was targeting deployment for May 2009. Songkitti promised to continue to work closely with the international community to insure fair and transparent processing of Lao Hmong refugees in Thailand.

¶2. (C) Comment. October 24 meetings between the two sides' Prime Ministers in Beijing on the margins of ASEM and by local military commanders in Cambodia are positive movements for the border dispute. More telling, however, will be whether Thailand and Cambodia can make tangible progress when the Joint Border Commission (JBC) begins talks. The Thai Parliament is expected to consider next week the August 19 provisional framework that provides for bilateral negotiations through the JBC. End comment.

THAI GOVERNMENT MAINTAINS BILATERAL TALKS ARE KEY

¶3. (C) Royal Thai Armed Forces (RTARF) Supreme Commander General Songkitti Jaggabartra October 24 told the Ambassador (accompanied by Poloff) that Cambodia had sent more troops and weapons to the area near the disputed territory around the Preah Vihear temple. The Thai military believed that there were now approximately 2,700 or 2,800 Cambodian troops situated in low lands below the temple. The Cambodian military had also deployed six multiple rocket launchers and several 130 millimeter artillery pieces to the area in recent days. Despite these actions, the Thai military believed that a peaceful solution would be found. Therefore, the Thai military only maintained approximately 600 Thai troops on the Thai side of the border in the area near the temple.

¶4. (C) The Thai government and military remained committed to resolving the problem bilaterally through negotiations,

Songkitti said. A meeting of the countries' Prime Ministers in Beijing and ongoing military talks through the Regional Border Committee were positive steps toward a peaceful solution. Involvement by the international community would not be necessary, Songkitti told the Ambassador, because the JBC would provide for direct bilateral talks.

CAMBODIAN POLITICS A CONCERN

15. (C) Songkitti believed that the underlying problem in the border dispute was that Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen was dealing with heightened domestic political demands and was using Preah Vihear to deflect the demands. Despite the success of Hun Sen's party in the late-July election, other political actors in Cambodia were demanding increased roles in the political process. Hun Sen understood the recent history of politics in Southeast Asia in that leaders who had been in power for extended periods of time, such as Marcos and Suharto, saw their dominance increasingly challenged as years passed, Songkitti explained.

THAILAND TO WORK WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ON HMONG

16. (SBU) The Ambassador reiterated the USG view that a transparent screening process was needed for Hmong refugees in Petchabun. Songkitti promised to continue to work closely with the USG and the international community to insure that the Hmong would be treated fairly, both in Thailand and in

BANGKOK 00003208 002 OF 002

Laos for those that choose to return. The RTARF was continuing discussions with the Vientiane government to insure that the Hmong who wanted to go back to Laos would be provided education and other social services in order that they could lead normal lives.

THAILAND EXPECTS TO DEPLOY TO DARFUR IN MAY-JULY NEXT YEAR

17. (SBU) Songkitti told the Ambassador that United Nations had recently given formal approval to Thailand to deploy a battalion of troops to Darfur. Necessary training for the troops has already commenced and the RTARF is targeting a May 2009 deployment to UNAMID.
JOHN